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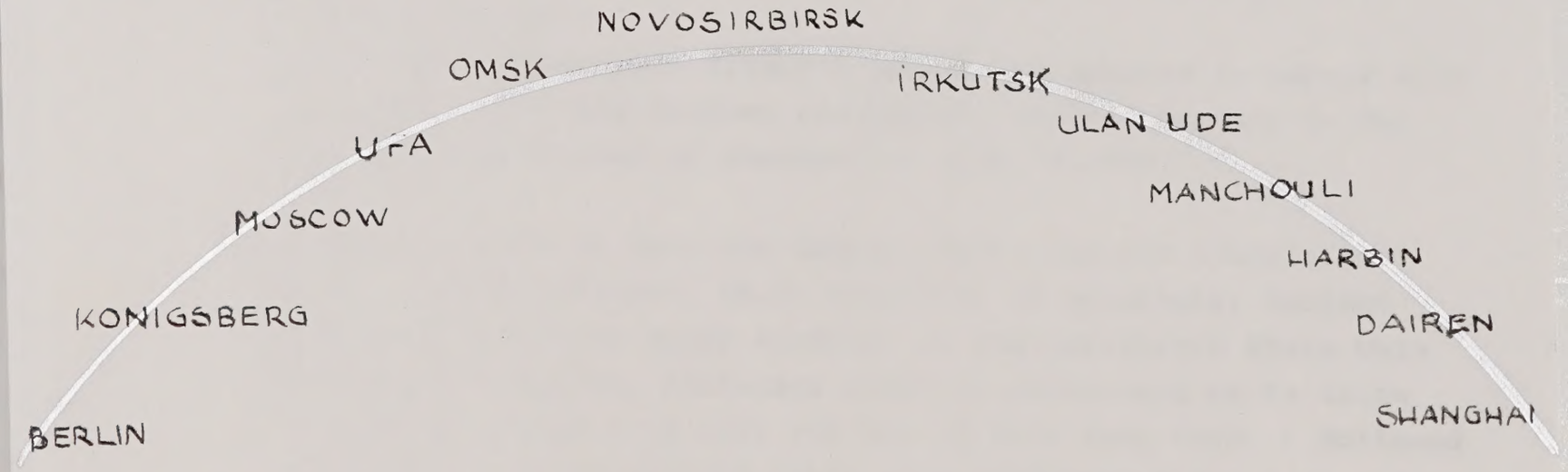
THE SIBERIAN EXPRESS

RECOLLECTIONS OF A 12 YEAR OLD BOY'S TRAIN RIDE

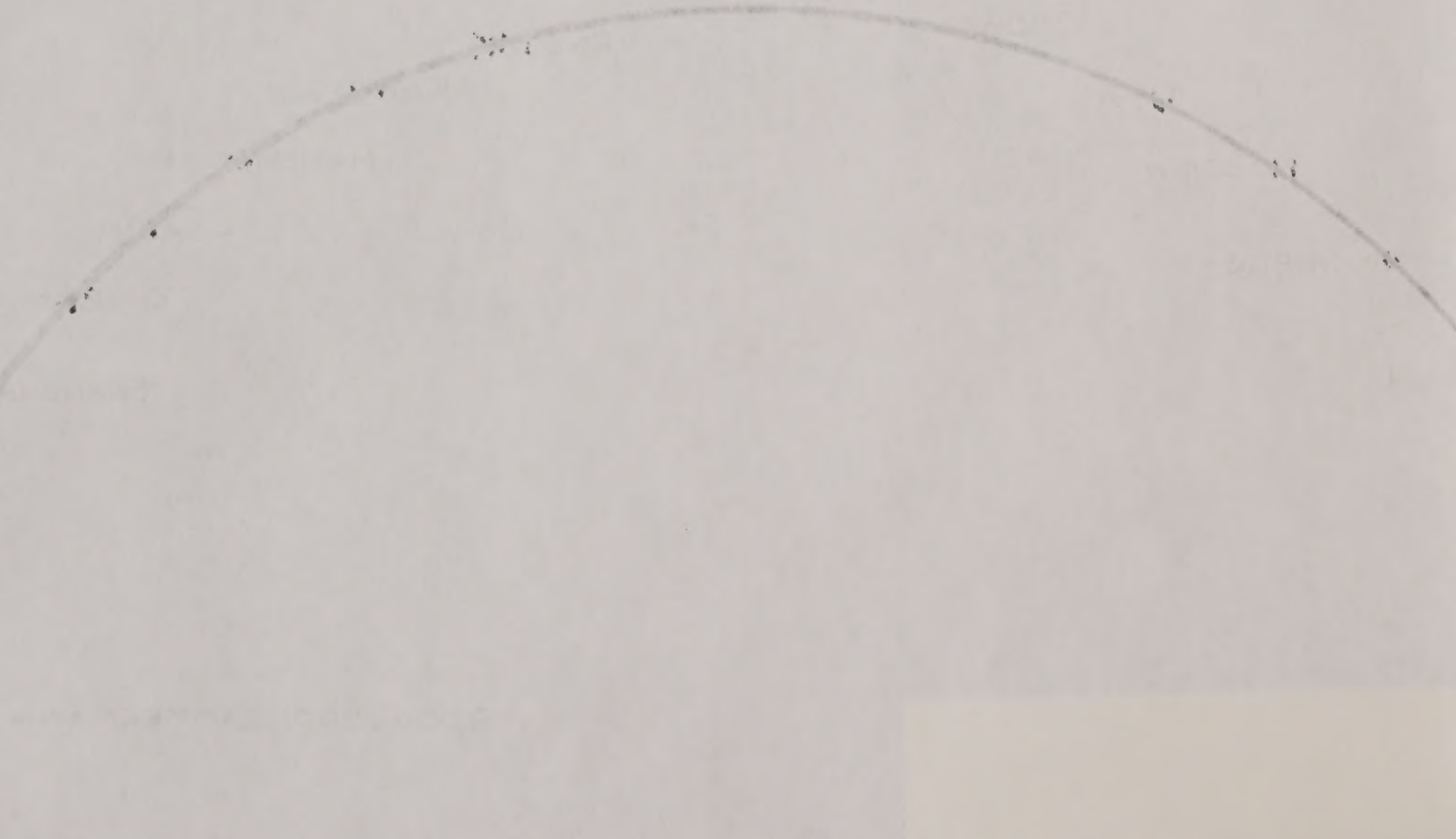
FROM

GERMANY THROUGH RUSSIA, MONGOLIA, MANCHURIA TO CHINA



BODO (BUD) ZIMMERMANN

Chapter 2 of 3



PROLOGUE

Chronologically, I am considered to be an old man at age 70. However, I like to think, at times, that I have not changed too much from the time I was 12 years old and travelled with my parents and my older brother by train from Germany through Russia, Mongolia to Manchuria and from there by boat to Shanghai, China.

I wrote my recollections of this very long trip, 14 days by train and 3 days by boat, for two reasons:

1.) Recently I found a partial letter in my father's files. The letter was written in German and was sent to my father in Germany in early 1940.
The letter describes the difficulties involved in arranging a trip on the Siberian Express through Russia. I found this letter very interesting and translated it into English for readers who are interested in train stories and who are interested in the experiences of German Jews who were fortunate to escape from Hitler's Germany.
My father followed his friend's advice and managed to escape with my mother, my older brother and myself. We left Germany on May 29, 1940 and arrived in Shanghai on June 19,1940.

2.) I mailed copies of both the German letter and its translation to Mr. Robert Gohstand, Ph.D. Professor of Geography, Project Director, Old China Hands Archive, at the California State University, Northridge. Professor Gohstand encouraged me to write my impressions as a 12 year old boy of this long trip. I followed his suggestion and dedicate this true adventure story to my son Allen Zimmermann, the last surviving member of my family, to my dear friend Jane Carranza and to all my dear Old China Hands friends.

Bodo (Bud) Zimmermann
San Francisco, California
May 29, 1998

TRANSLATION OF THE PARTIAL LETTER I FOUND IN MY FATHER'S FILES.

VIA SIBERIA

Details about the train ride from Berlin Germany to Shanghai, China during the early part of 1940.

Based on the travel schedule, the enormous distance from Berlin to Dairen, Manchuria by train, should be accomplished within 11½ days to which 2 days for passage by boat from Dairen to Shanghai will have to be added.

A traveller could embark in Berlin and arrive in Shanghai 14 days later provided, that connections during this trip are according to schedule, which certainly is not always the case. Therefore one has to expect that the average travel time will take at least 16 days.

The fare from Berlin to Shanghai including diverse additional charges amounts for 3rd class 185. RM. (Reich Marks), for 2nd class 430 RM. and for 1st class 610RM. these fares include ship's passage with an equivalent class cabin from Dairen to Shanghai.

It must be emphasized that the trip in 3rd class is only encouraged if forced circumstances have to be considered, because you travel under comparative primitive conditions which place great demands on the traveller. In comparison the use of 2nd class is much more com= fortable. The 2nd class differs from 1st class especially in so far that the sleeping cars are open, that means no closed compartments, similar to a hospital ward, while passengers in 1st class, the use of which offers many amenities, have two bed compartments which can be readily converted into two lower and two upper beds.

The trip 1st class could be made less expensive by purchasing a 2nd class rail ticket from Berlin to the German border. Right now, only 2nd and 3rd class is available.

The Siberian Express as this whole trip is referred to, can be con= nected with in two ways from Germany. Either via Poland or via Lithuania/ Latvia. At this time only the latter connection is possible. However, this does not shut out the possibility that changes may occur.

In any case, the current way requires the completion of numerous formalities. The most important is to have a large collection of passport photos available and for the procurement of diverse documents you need to have much small change in your pocket.

The first step is always the same: go to your police district where you will receive a sealed envelope which you take to the passport office where a visa to cross the German border will be issued. This is valid for three weeks only and costs 8 marks. from there to the foreign office to obtain a border certificate for Japan and China. With this certificate and an entrance permit from the Japanese con= sulate in Shanghai you can now apply for a visa at the Japanese con= sulate in Germany. Once you have the visa in your passport you will be able to obtain visas for Mongolia and Manchuria without any difficulties.
Before you start your trip though, you must obtain visas for Lithuania, Latvia and Russia. I don't have to mention to you that a trip out of Germany without a clearance from the finance department, the labor exchange and the foreign exchange department would be impossible.

The shipping of household goods is practically impossible because of many restrictions.
The handling of baggage is rather costly. There is a free limit of 35 kilos, each additional 10 kilos costs 11.80 marks. Enroute you will encounter various baggage control check points. So it is recom= mended to leave the keys with the luggage attendant in order to prevent the forced opening of baggage at inspection stations.

Don't burden yourself with too much baggage because during the trip you will have to change trains frequently. For instance at Konigs= berg, Radziviliski, Dunaberg, Moscow, Manchouli, Harbin and Dairen. In case you miss your connection in Moscow you may have to wait [illegible] for a few days for the next train, but it can also happen that you may have to transfer at a frantic rush and large pieces of bag= gage may stay behind. It is for that reason that it is advisable to have the keys with the baggage attendant.

The train cars come from different Russian regions and have their own character. The best impression you will get is on the train from

Manchouli to Harbin which offers very clean and very comfortable cars. Travellers in 1st class are provided with kimonos and wooden slippers. Also the train from Harbin to Dairen is very comfortable.

As you can see my description so far covered only travel. Now the question about food leaves a lot to be desired. During the approximately 6 day trip through Russia the traveller is provided with meals, the cost of which is included in the fare. At this writing, the food is sufficient and on the average good tasting. 3 meals are served in the dining car, the evening dinner is the main meal. But since you are only allowed to take 10 marks per person out of Germany you have to make plans for the remaining 10 days. You can accomplish that by taking food supplies and a small camp stove with you.
But this problem may also be overcome now, apparently payments of Zehrgeld (travel expenses) can be made to the Japanese tourist bureau in Manchuria.

From past experiences the trains in Russia are accompanied by officials from the Intourist bureau who assist the traveller with advise and suggestions.

This ends the partial letter.

Einzelheiten zur Landreise Deutschland-Shanghai.

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Fahrplanmässig wird die gewaltige Strecke Berlin-Dairen von den Eisenbahnlagen in 11 1/2 Tagen bewältigt, zu den noch zwei weitere Tage für die Weiter Passage Dairen-Shanghai hinzuzählen sind. Praktisch konnte also ein Reisender im Verlauf von nur 14 Tagen z. B. in Berlin ein- und in Shanghai aussteigen, wenn die Anschlüsse unterwegs vorschriftsmässig klappen. Da dies aber nicht immer der Fall ist, ist mit einer Durchschnittsreisezeit von 16 Tagen zu rechnen. Der Fahrpreis Berlin-Shanghai beträgt einschliesslich der diversen Zuschläge für die dritte Klasse rund 280.-, für die zweite Klasse rund 430.-, und für die erste Klasse rund 610.- Reichsmark einschl. der Schiffspassage entsprechender Klasse ab Dairen. Es sei gleich betont, dass die Fahrt dritter Klasse nur in Frage kommt, wenn zwingende Umstände vorliegen, da sie unter verhältnismässig primitiven Bedingungen sehr hohe Anforderungen an die Reisenden stellt. Dagegen ist die Benutzung der zweiten Klasse bedeutend angenehmer. Sie unterscheidet sich von der ersten Klasse insbesondere dadurch, dass die Schlafwagen "offen" sind, d.h. sie haben nicht geschlossene Kabinen, sondern stellen vielmehr eine Art Schlafsaal dar, während die Fahrgäste in der ersten Klasse, deren Benutzung überhaupt grosse Annehmlichkeiten bietet, durchschnittlich zweibettige Schlafkabinen vorfindet. Die Fahrt erster Klasse kann noch dadurch etwas verbilligt werden, dass man bis zur deutschen Grenze 2.Klasse löst, da ja die dort ansässig die Züge nur mit 2.-oder 3.-Klasse-Wagen laufen.

Der Sibirien-Expresse - wie der gesamte Zuglauf kurz genannt zu werden pflegt- kann auf zwei Wegen von Deutschland aus fahren, entweder via Polen oder via Lettland-Litauen. Zur Zeit funktioniert nur der letzte Weg, was aber nicht ausschliesst, dass von heute auf morgen wieder eine Änderung erfolgt. Jedenfalls ist gerade der jetzige Weg mit der Erledigung zahlreicher Formalitäten verbunden, und das Wichtigste ist beinahe, sich zunächst eine grosse Sammlung von Passphotos anzulegen und für die Beschaffung der diversen Dokumente reichlich Kleingeld in die Tasche zu stecken.

Der erste Gang ist immer der gleiche: zum zuständigen Polizeirevier, von wo man mit einem versiegelten Kouvert zur Hauptstelle geschickt wird zwecks Eintragung eines Sichtvermerks zum Passieren der deutschen Grenze, dieser hat nur drei Wochen Gültigkeit und kostet 8.-RM. Hiermit geht man zum auswärtigen Amt zwecks Erlangung einer Kreuzbescheinigung für Japan und Doina. Auf Grund dieser Bescheinigung sowie eines Einreise-Permits des japanischen Generalkonsuls in Shanghai wird neuerdings der jüdische Emigrant beim japanischen Konsulat in Deutschland das japanische Visum bekommen können. Mit dem japanischen Sichtvermerk im Pass erhält man dann ohne weiteres das Visum für Mandschukuo. Vor Antritt der Reise muss aber der Pass des Auswanderers mit den Visen für Lettland, Litauen und Russland versehen sein. Dass auch bei der Bahnfahrt eine Ausreise ohne die erforderlichen Unbedenklichkeitsbescheinigungen der Finanz-und Arbeitsämter sowie der Devisenstellen unmöglich ist, braucht wohl kaum erwähnt zu werden.

Die Mitnahme von eigen. Umzugsgut ist auf dem Landweg wohl kaum

THE SIBERIAN EXPRESS

RECOLLECTIONS OF A 12 YEAR OLD BOY'S TRAIN RIDE ON THE SIBERIAN EXPRESS DURING MAY - JUNE 1940.

On November 9th, 1938, the German Nazis went on an unrestrained assault on Jewish people throughout Germany. On that night they destroyed and appropriated 1000's of Jewish owned businesses and factories. They burned Jewish houses of worship and arrested Jewish families for no reason, other than that they were Jews, The Jews were incarcerated in concentration camps, where eventually 6 million Jews perished under horrible conditions.
November 9th is remembered as "Kristallnacht" (Crystal night) because of the shattered glass which covered sidewalks in all business sections of every city in Germany.

The day after "Kristallnacht" my brother Herbert who was 22 years old, confronted my parents. He told them, if they wanted to remain in Germany, he would leave the family and take me along with him to England.
My mother who was Jewish, was also very German. She truly believed that the German people would not put up much longer with a leader like Adolf Hitler. She believed right from the time Hitler came to power in 1933, and continued her in her belief even after my parent's small department store was confiscated by the Nazi regime in 1936.

She could not understand how some of our relatives could give up their successful businesess and leave Germany to start a new life in other places of the world. My mother had opposed the decision of my 24 year old sister Gerda, when she, her husband and their new-born baby left for Shanghai, China in late 1938. My father tried to reason with my mother, but he was no match for my very strong-willed and business-minded mother. Only when my brother Herbert presented his ultimatum did my mother relent. She did not want to break up our family and agreed that we should also go to this un-civilized place in far off China and be close to my sister's family.

Actually, Shanghai was the only place left in the world where German Jewish refugees were welcome. Since Germany had annexed many countries in Europe and was already at war with England, all western countries had closed their borders to German refugees.

My father began to make arrangements to leave Germany as quickly as possible. He knew that he was not permitted to take or transfer money out of the country, but there were no restrictions on shipping out merchandise. Through his former business connections he managed to purchase different kinds of merchandise which he planned to ship to Shanghai. Together with our household goods he shipped 20 x 500 cuft. containers to Shanghai where he intended to start a new business.

At that time I was not quite 12 years old and was not included in any of the grown-up affairs of the day. My biggest concern was to get to and from the Jewish school on Klopstock street without being taunted with racial slurs or being beaten by the Hitler youth who were always ready to prove that they were the master race.

It did not take my father too long to make all the arrangements to leave Germany by way of Italy and from there by ship through the Mediterranien Sea, through the Suez Canal, the Red Sea, Indian Ocean to China. My father had to purchase round-trip tickets for the boat trip even though he had no intention of ever returning to Italy. It was an established extortion by the shipping agents who had to be paid the return fare in order to secure passage on the ship. We were scheduled to leave in February of 1940.

My imagination was now fired up. I saw myself as an invincible explorer who was going to face heretofore unknown adventures and experiences. I saw myself riding camels near the Suez Canal in search of yet undiscovered royal Egyptian tombs; or saving a maharajah's daughter from the fangs of a man or woman-eating tiger. I would help her father with plans to defend his province against marauding bandits, without expecting any rewards for my heroic deeds. The maharajah's friendship would be the best reward. Unfortunately, my dreams were shattered. Apparently, my father had failed to complete a minor detail on the many government forms he needed to fill out. This oversight caused a delay in obtaining our clearances to leave Berlin and we

were not able to travel to Genoa, Italy, from where the ship departed without us. It was the last passenger ship to leave Italy for China. My father was unable to obtain a refund for the passage he paid from the Italian shipping company.
I was certain that the undiscovered tombs in Egypt would now never be found, the maharajah's daughter would be eaten by the tiger and the maharajah would lose his fight against the bandits; all because of my father's oversight in making a mistake on the exit forms.

Fortunately, my father still had sufficient funds available which enabled him to purchase tickets to leave Germany by train. The train was going to take us through Lithuania, Latvia, these are two small countries on the Baltic Sea, from there through Russia, Mongolia to Manchuria and then by boat to China. By now my father knew his way around the foreign consulates and acquired the necessary visas and permits which finally allowed us to leave Germany. I did not know anything about the countries which we were going to travel through, so my imagination failed me in creating some inspiring adventures.

While all this was going on, the containers with merchandise and household goods had been shipped to Italy from where it was going to be transported by ship to China. The remaining furniture was sold and/or given away. All that remained in the now empty apartment were our four suitcases stuffed with clothing, toiletries, some food, books and a blanket for each of us. All items which we would need on our long trip to China.

My prize possessions at that time were two small "Schuco" wind-up toy cars. One was a remote control car, the other a command car. The remote control car was nothing like the radio controlled, battery powered toy cars of the 1990s. My car was controlled by a hand held little steering wheel which was connected by a long piano wire to the movable front wheels. While the car was in motion, I could steer the car left or right by turning the hand held steering wheel.

The command car could be made to stop or move by voice command. The ceiling of this little red car had long narrow open slots under which was a thin metal plate that could move up or down like a see-saw. So, when the car was wound up and running I would lean over the car and say "stop" and the car would immediately stop. The airpressure, created by pronouncing the letter "p" in the word stop, would push down one side of the plate and lock the motor. When I pronounced the letter "f" in the German word "abfahrt" which means start, again the airpressure would push down the side of the plate which was in the up position releasing the motor and the car would drive off. It was really a very simple mechanism. Anyway I had lots of fun with these two small cars which were about 4 inches long and fitted easily into the pockets of my jacket. To impress friends, I sometimes invented foreign words to make the car stop and go.

The day before we were going to board the train for the long train ride, I went to say good-bye to my teachers and the few classmates at the Jewish school. The classes had shrunk to only a few students, maybe 10 or 12. Most of my classmates had left the school during the previous year and had gone with their parents to other countries. I am certain that the few students and teachers who where still there, were not able to get out of Germany and probably perished in one of the many concentration camps.

May 29th, the day of our departure, finally arrived. We spent our last night in the empty apartment, sleeping on the floor wrapped up in our blankets. It was gloomy. Exept for our suitcases the place was like a funeral parlor. When you talked, your voice echoed from the walls. My mother, whom I had never seen crying, was sobbing as she walked through the empty rooms. My father tried to comfort her but could not control her tears. I was embarassed by all this emotional outpouring. I did not understand the tremendous difficulties and responsibilities my parents were facing and the stress of travelling to a strange country whose language they did not understand. There was no job waiting for them and they had no idea what the future held in store for them.

Our train did not leave from the Bahnhof Zoo station until late that evening. It seemed to me that time just would not move forward. I played with my cars and the noise I made drove my parents and my brother, (who was always studying something) frantic.
My father gave me a book to read. I remember the title, "Emil and the Detective" it was about a young boy who travelled by train to visit his relatives. For safekeeping his mother pinned some paper money, which he was to give to his aunt, in his coat. She warned Emil not to speak to strangers on the train. A nice old man, who was in the same compartment with Emil, struck up a conversation and shared some candies with him. Emil told him about his visit to his aunt and about the money he was going to give to her. After waking up from a short nap Emil found his money missing. He reported this to the train conductor who requested a police inspector at the next station. Emil told the policeman that he believed the old man took his money because he was the only person on the train who knew about it. The policeman explained to Emil that he could not request to see the man's money because all paper money looked alike and there is no proof that the money belonged to Emil. " I am sorry but I can't help you" besides you probably lost your money somewhere else". Just as the policeman was about to step off the train Emil shouted: " wait, I can prove which is my money! my money has pinholes in it, because my mother pinned it into my coat". Well, this changed the situation and the policeman asked the old man to show his wallet for an inspection. There he found the paper money with the pinholes. The man was arrested, Emil got his money back and became a hero that day on the train. Anyway, this is the way I recall the story which I read 58 years ago on the day we were getting ready to leave Berlin forever. The story was so exciting that the time passed away quickly. Now the time came to take our baggage to the front of our apartment-house where a taxicab was waiting to take us to the Bahnhof Zoo station.

It was the end of May in Berlin and the weather was still cold. I had to wear an overcoat which was too large for me. I believe that

it was an overcoat which my brother had outgrown. The coat was too long and the sleeves were so long my fingertips barely saw the daylight. My mother assured me that I would grow into it very quickly and the coat would look very good on me. I felt terribly embarassed to be seen in a coat that obviously was not my size. How could I explore the world in such a coat ?. For the next few days I would check to see if I could see my hands, but they stayed hidden in my sleeves.

My uncle and my aunt came to the station to say good-bye with many hugs and many tears. I was bored by all this show of affection and sadness. I was anxious to get on the train and start our trip to the mysterious Far East. I did not know then that I would never see my uncle and aunt again. I remember very fondly that whenever I visited them my aunt would always give me "florentines" thin wafers of chocolate embeddedwith almonds and candied orange peel. My uncle played children's songs on the piano and I would sing along.

The station was crowded with German soldiers, officers and black uniformed "SS" stormtroopers who added a somber feeling to our farewell. We finally entered the train and settled in our 2nd class compartment which we shared with four other passengers. We greeted each other but did not converse.

We were now on our way to the Far East. The words Far East had anice exotic far away ring to my ear. Travelling to such a distant place gave me a feeling of importance.
In spite of the fact that it was very late, I was not tired and told my father that I would look around the train and would be right back.
"OK, but don't step off the train!"
I opened the dividing door to the next car and found myself in a 3rd class compartment full of smoke, smelling of beer and filled with intoxicated soldiers who were drinking, smoking, playing cards and boisterously singing songs. Being Jewish I was afraid of the German soldiers and wanted to go to my compartment, but one of the said, "you look just like my kid brother". His buddies gathered

around and gave me candy and asked me what I was doing on the train going to Poland, where did I come from, "Do you have a sister that I could write to?" asked one of them. I told them that I was travelling with my parents to China on this train. They were quite impressed, 'and what is your father going to do there?" " oh, he is the new German Ambassador to China ! I said without blinking an eye. Well, these soldiers were very impressed to meet a son of an Ambassador, no less! They had probably never met anyone from German high society. If they had asked me if Hitler personally appointed my father, I would have said "of course". I began to enjoy myself with these soldiers. One of them said he wished that he could go with us instead of where he had to go. I finally said that I had to return to my compartment and said good-bye to my new-found friends. Before I left though, these intoxicated soldiers made a toast to me, they lifted their bottles of beer, "Here is to the son of the new German Ambassador to China, Heil Hitler." I very smartly returned the salute and rushed back to the safety of our 2nd class compartment.
My father asked me about all of the commotion in the next car. I just said that soldiers were drinking and having a good time. Later, after we had crossed the German border I told him what had happened in the other car. He was upset. "Do you know that we could have all been arrested?" Every once in a while I would address my father as Herr Botschafter (Mr. Ambassador) and he would smile.
Sometime during the night the military coaches were uncoupled and I did not see my soldier friends again. Maybe, the little white lie I told the soldiers cheered them up a bit, meeting the son of an Ambassador could have been a bright spot in their miserable short soldier's life on the eastern front. At least I hope so.

We travelled the next day through parts of German-occupied Poland. The view from the train was very unpleasant. Many destroyed villages and devastated small towns patrolled by German soldiers and lots of military vehicles moving through the muddy streets.

Later that day we arrived at Konigsberg, now called Kalliningrad, where we had to clear German customs and border control before entering

Lithuania.
All of our papers and visas were in order, but my father had more than the 10 marks each person was allowed to take out of Germany. So my father told the inspector, "if I can't take it with me, why don't you just keep it". The official replied that he couldn't do that because it would be against the law. My father must telegraph the excess money back to his bank or his relatives in Germany. So. my brother was sent to the telegraph operator in this railroad station to wire the few excess marks to my uncle in Berlin. when my brother returned to our train the customs official asked for the receipt from the telegraph office. My brother said that he threw it away, but you could ask the telegraph operator who would verify that the money was sent back to Berlin. "Oh no" said the official, I must post the receipt with my report, so, you go back and find the receipt. I will hold the train for a few minutes, so hurry up". My brother returned with the crumpled receipt, the official entered it into his report, wished us a good trip and signaled to the train conductor that he could now leave. The Germans seemed so contradictory, on the one hand the German government steals and imprisons people who had done nothing wrong except that they believe in a different religion and on the other hand you have German officials, who are very honest and extremely precise and accurate in their responsibilities like the official we had just encountered. It did not make sense. But it does not matter anymore we had now left Germany, the country my father had fought for during the first world war in which he had lost two brothers.

We were now in Lithuania, the sights from the train were very dreary. The country looked poor and war-torn. The same applied to the next country Latvia, where we stopped at Dunaburg now called Daugavpils. From here we continued to Moscow.
We arrived in Moscow the following evening which, by now, was our third day on the train. We arrived late and missed our connection with the Siberian Express.

At the Moscow railroad station we were met by an Intourist (Russian government travel agency) guide who helped us with our baggage and took us by car to the Metro Hotel.
We were all rather exhausted and tired and looked forward to sleeping on a comfortable bed. The elevator which took us up to our floor was a rickety contraption, the room that we were assigned to had a very high ceiling and the bathroom was enormous. Filling up the bathtub was accompanied by much noise from the exposed water pipes. At first brown colored water came out of the faucet. but it cleared, and then steaming hot water began to fill the tub, but not for very long. The tub was not even half full when the water turned warm and then ice cold. It was decided that we would all wash ourselves, one by one, in this one tub of water, because it was unlikely that there was more hot water in the system! After three long days on the train it was necessary for us to wash ourselves. Besides, we hoped that more hot water would be available during the next day. However, the next day we had the same experience, we managed to wash ourselves by each of us using the bathroom hours apart.

I was very much impressed the first morning, when we went downstairs to the restaurant to have breakfast. The dining room was like something out of a grand castle. The ceiling was covered with many mirrors, each mirror was framed in opulent gold frames. Beautiful chandeliers were suspended from the ceiling. The walls were similarly beautifully decorated. When I looked up at the ceiling I would get a bird's eye view of our table. I don't remember what the food was like, but apparently it was good and must have been enough because I did not feel hungry. We stayed two nights at this hotel.

After breakfast that morning, we went on a sightseeing tour of Moscow. The first place our Intourist guide took us to was to look at the walls of the Kremlin. We were not allowed to enter the Kremlin. No-one was except on official business. In the Kremlin Stalin and other high officials conducted their government functions. From there we walked to the Red Square and visited Lenin's mausoleum. There was a long line of Russians waiting to see the burial place. As foreign

visitors, we did not have to wait in line and were escorted past the honor guard into the mausoleum. Lenin , lies in state, embalmed in a glass coffin. I thought he was a tall man. I was glad to get out of there, because everybody was very quiet and talked only in whispers. It was eerie. I saw many old Russian cathedrals with onion-shaped domes and old buildings, but nothing as nice as the dining room at the Metro Hotel. Everywhere we went, people were waiting in line to enter the various sites. I told my father isn't it good to be an ambassador? he just laughed. It made me happy to see him laugh.

We also visited the government-owned department store GUM. It was a very large store but it seemed very empty of merchandise. Since my father owned a small department store and I had been to many large department stores in Berlin I felt that GUM was nothing much in comparison. Even I noticed that the displays looked drab and lacked imagination. The toy department did not impress me at all. No erector sets, some tinny-looking wind-up cars and not even teddy bears. My mother asked the guide, "why are the shelves so empty?" He said "that the store is preparing the shelves for new merchandise which will arrive any day now."

After visiting GUM, we went to a nearby Moscow subway station. I must admit that this subway was far superior to the subway I knew in Berlin. When I stood on top of the down escalator I was not able to see the end of the escalator. Our guide told us how deep down the station was. I am not quite sure whether he said 70 or 100 meters (200 or 300 feet) below ground. The station itself was very impressive. The walls were covered with small mosaic tiles, there were fountains and the trains arrived at the station at such high speeds, Ithought they would not be able to stop in the station because they were moving so fast; but they did stop at precisely the length of the station. When the passengers got on the train and the doors closed, the train shot out of the station like a bullet. I had never seen anything like it.

My brother who was very good at sketching, sketched pictures of the station. He also sketched pictures of people, churches, monuments and anything that interested him.

We also went on a short steamboat ride on the Moscow river that afternoon. We had a full day of sightseeing.

In the evening we were back in the beautiful dining room. We talked about our day and what we should do the next day before leaving Moscow. Itold my father and brother that I hoped the Siberian Express would be as fast and as modern as the Moscow subway. My father interrupted our conversation and said; "did you just notice that Mr. ?, who had been travelling with us from Berlin, was just escorted out of the restaurant by two Russian men?" No, none of us had noticed it and we did not give it much thought. We went back to our room and ran a bath, this time there seemed to be more hot water available. The next morning, our fifth day away from Berlin, my brother and I went for a walk after breakfast. We walked back to the Kremlin, past Lenin's mausoleum, we noticed people still standing in line to see him. We watched soldiers on parade. Some Russians stopped to talk to us. They looked admiringly at our clothing and even felt the material of my overcoat. After having been to the GUM department store I began to understand their interest in our clothing. I felt pretty good now about my overcoat. They showed us a lot of rubles and wanted to buy our coats. All Icould say was"nyet, nye panimai" no, no understand. Then it was time to go back to the hotel to meet our parents for lunch. After lunch we had to get ready to go to the railroad station where I would finally see the ultra modern,high-speed Siberian Express.

The train station did not look anything like the Metro subway station. Instead it was very grubby and smelly. Well, I thought to myself, this undoubtedly was an old station and the Siberian Express will make up for this disappointment. Then, with much smoke and steam, a train with a large locomotive pulled in at our platform and came to a squeaking stop while expelling a lot of smelly steam. The Intourist guide said, "here is your train, I will help you with your baggage and then I must say good-bye" I said to the guide, "are you sure this is the right train? I thought that the Siberian Express is a gleaming streamlined express train" Oh yes, he said proudly isn"t she beautiful?" Since I was the son of an ambassador, I swallowed

my disappointment, and diplomatically agreed with him. As we boarded the train with the help of our guide, my father noticed that the man who had left the restaurant in the company of the two Russians yesterday evening, was brought back to the train by the same two men.

The 1st class compartment, which was going to be our camp for the next ten days until we reached the Mongolian border, was quite pleasant. It gave the appearance of faded elegance. It had highly polished woodwork and upholstered bench type seats. These seats converted in the evening into two lower and two upper beds which were very comfortable. There was a folding table attached below the window. My brother and I used the upper beds which had reading lamps and my parents slept on the lower beds. There was also a small washroom but no toilet. There were toilets at each end of the coach. Our compartment was closed off by a sliding door which opened into the passage way. We settled ourselves into our new surroundings very quickly. It was not too long after getting settled when the Siberian Express left the Jaroslawer station in Moscow.

I immediately explored my new world which was not that large. There were two 1st class coaches and two 2nd class coaches and the dining car. The doors to the other coaches were blocked off by some soldiers who by sign language made me understand that I could not go into the other coaches.
That evening we had dinner in the dining car. It must have been alright as no one in our family complained about the food. It was the first time that I tasted a fermented, slightly alcoholic fruit flavored drink called "Kvass". It tasted very good. It was served to me by a very attractive black-haired older waitress, she must have been at least twice as old as I was. I say attractive now, but when I saw her then, at age 12, I thought she was the most beautiful lady in the world. I found many excuses to go to the dining car, before and after meals. She taught me how to count in Russian and taught me a few Russian words. Having her as my friend in the dining car made me feel very grown up and exchanging a few words with her made me feel very sophisticated. I even overlooked the dirty table

linen on the tables which probably had not been changed since the train was put into operation at the turn of the century 40 years earlier.

I really began to enjoy myself on this trip. However the scenery did not impress me much. We travelled through many small towns and villages, through forests and large wheat fields. There was wheat growing as far as my eyes could see. Sometimes we would approach military areas and a Russian officer on our train would ask us to pull down the window shades while he and a soldier walked up and down the passage-way to see that nobody looked out of the window. My brother would use this opportunity to go to the toilet and watch the scenery from there undisturbed. But after a few trips to the toilet, whenever we had to draw our shades, the officer caught on and ordered my brother to use the toilet only when it was alright to look at the scenery. My brother never saw anything during his secret observations. The officer was always very polite. He spoke Polish which my mother also understood and spoke quite fluently.

During the next few days, we travelled through cities whose names are still embedded in my mind. Ufa, near the Ural mountains, Omsk, Novosibirsk, Irkutsk and Ulan-Ude on the south eastern side of Lake Baikal. The areas we passed through seemed sparsely populated. The train would stop in small towns where my brother and I would rush from the train to the station to fill our thermos bottle with boiling water which was dispensed at no charge as a service to the travellers. Sometimes the train would stop for no reason at all it seemed, passengers would step off the train to pick wild flowers. I did too, I picked flowers for my mother but when I passed the dining car I changed my mind and gave them to my waitress friend instead.
At times the train would stop to pick up or unload passengers where there was no real station. People from nearby villages would be waiting there for the train in order to sell prepared foods and handmade items. I suppose it was a big event for these villagers whenever the train came through their area.

I remember we once stopped at a railroad station which seemed a distance away from the track. As usual, my brother and I grabbed the thermos bottle and ran to the station to resplenish our boiling water supply. We had run a few steps when I happened to look back at the train and saw it moving, I shouted at my brother,"Herbert the train is leaving". We turned around and ran back to the moving train. My brother lifted me up onto one of the rear platforms and then he jumped on. This was only possible on the Siberian Express because the train always started out very slowly and took a long time before gathering speed. It was a good thing that it did not take off like the Moscow subway!

From the platform we entered the coach and found ourselves in a 3rd class car full of Russian travellers. There was no way for us to get back to our compartment. My brother said we would just have to wait until the train stopped again, and then we could walk back to our coach. The passengers in this coach realized right away that we were foreigners, they surrounded us and offered us bread, herrings, onions and tea. They talked and smiled and felt our clothing and made remarks about it. Even though we could not understand each other there was lots of laughter and happiness. Then I pulled one of my "Schuco" toy cars, which I always carried on me, out of my pocket and showed how it worked. Well, it practically started a revolution. Everybody wanted to look at it and play with it. These were not children but adults. Apparently they had never seen anything like it in their whole lives. We were offered handfull of money, bottles of vodka and I don't remember what else, but I would not part with my treasures. Then the train started to slow down and there was a lot of shouting going on, on the outside. Soldiers were running alongside the train, people in this coach hollered back to the soldiers and kept pointing in our direction. Before the train stopped completely our Russian officer came in and took us back to our coach with a lot of shouting and waiving from our new-found fellow passengers.

My parents were worried when we did not return with the boiling

water at our last stop and told the Russian officer, who accompanied our coach, that we were probably still at the last station. He stopped the train and had his soldiers check all the coaches before he found ys. I wondered what would have happened if my brother and I had actually been left behind at that station. Maybe they would have backed up the train.

My father told us that he had spoken to the man who was accompanied out of the restaurant in Moscow. The two men were policemen and had arrested him on a very serious charge of spitting on the picture of Lenin. What happened was this, when he paid for his dinner and received some change from the cashier, he pretended to spit on the papermoney. An old German custom at that time was that when you receive a gift of money you pretend to spit on it in order to make it multiply. That was all he did. He had a difficult time explaining this custom to the police who kept him overnight in prison for this infraction.

Our train was also stopped a few times during our trip for inspection of our possessions. This happened sometimes during the day and sometimes at night. Everyone had to get off the train with their baggage. The baggage was thoroughly inspected, we had to empty our pockets. My toy cars always raised great interest or maybe suspicion. I am surprised that they did not confiscate these toys. But when they saw my brother's sketches they kept them. While they searched us they would also search the compartments on the train. I guess the Russians were just very suspicious of foreigners. At one inspection station an inspector asked my father in a perfect Berlin accent "haben Sie Knarren?" (do you have revolvers?) I was amazed to hear him use the word "Knarre" because that was strictly Berlin slang.

Our trainride became routine. The train had a communication system which was used to announce the names of the next station, in between it would play scratchy-sounding mostly martial music day in and day out. One had to listen to this boring music . So one day I tried to make myself understood to my beautiful waitress and asked her where this music came from. She took me by the hand to the end of the coach

where there was a small cabin with some radio equipment attended by a woman dressed in a railroad uniform. There were lots of records and she allowed me to look at them and let me play some of them. Among all the Russian records, the labels of which I could not read, I found an English record. I could not understand English either but my brother translated the title for me. It was "Who is afraid of the big bad wolf" I asked the lady to play it for me and she did so many times during this trip. She probably liked it better than the Russian martial music.

At the end of our coach, opposite from the toilet was a large samovar attended by an old man who seemed to sit next to it day and night. He prepared tea for passengers who requested his service. By now I had learned to count in Russian and knew a few Russian words. So I struck up a conversation with him and managed to explain that I wanted four cups of tea delivered to our compartment. Then I went back to our compartment and waited for the delivery. About half an hour later the old man brought us four beautiful cups of steaming hot tea. I was very proud that I was able to make myself understood by the old man, after all he brought the correct amount of tea. But grown-ups sometimes don't appreciate what children are able to accomplish. My mother was enraged. "What is this for?" she asked. I told her that I had ordered the tea. Then she said to me, "don't you know that we have to pay for this luxury?" I replied,"I don't think so, it is a service the train provides for the passengers, besides the water does not cost anything and the old man had nothing to do anyway." A few days later when we approached the Russian border at Mongolia we were presented with a bill which amounted to five marks. Half of the money which Germany allowed me to take out of the country. I had spent this money which was to be the foundation of my future, on four cups of tea! But nevertheless it was good-tasting tea and I remember this incident to this day. It was worth it.

We finally arrived at the large city of Irkutsk located on the western side of the lower end of Lake Baikal. The scenery became more interesting. The area was more populated than the areas we passed during the last

few days, the people looked like Mongolians with very red faces, maybe it was still pretty cold here. My brother pointed out that Lake Baikal is the largest and deepest fresh water lake in the world and there are many hydro-electric power plants around this lake. I loved receiving such information because some day I would be able to impress my friends with how much I knew. The trip around the southern tip of Lake Baikal took us through uncountable tunnels. Everytime we entered a tunnel, the smoke from the locomotive forced its way into the coaches and compartments making everybody cough, depositing soot on every surface including the clothing we wore. We were glad to leave the tunnels behind. Our next stop was Ulan-Ude on the eastern side of Lake Baikal. The names of the cities we passed had Mongolian sounds to them. I lost count of the days we had spent on the trains. However, each day that passed brought us closer to our destination.

After leaving the city of Ulan-Ude, the country became desolate. My brother and I were standing in the passage way looking out of the window, we talked about what we would do in Shanghai. For me it was going to be school. My brother said he hoped to find an engineering position with one of the large British or American companies. All of a sudden he pointed out at a yurt village in the distance. I asked him , "what are yurts?" He explained that these were large circular tents in which Mongolian families lived. The yurts could be readily disassembled and put up in another location where there might be better grazing land for their animals. They moved these yurts with the changing seasons. Then we noticed a group of riders on horseback galloping towards our train. The train did not slow down but the riders caught up with us. There must have been twenty men riding alongside the train. They shouted and laughed, they waved to us. Some of them carried bags, All of a sudden a few of the riders jumped off their small horses onto the train. The other riders took the reins of the riderless horses and kept on riding alongside. I thought I was watching a wild west movie. The men who had jumped off their horses came walking through our passage-way and went towards the dining car. These men looked fierce. They had

long thin mustaches and wore colorful clothing, quite different from ours,with wide cloth belts around their waists. I was frightened of these strange-looking men and stayed close to my brother. They smiled at us and one of them patted my head. As they passed us, I saw that they carried large daggers in colorful leather sheaths stuck in the back of their belts. The train attendants greeted them and appeared to know them so I realized that I did not have to be afraid. What these fierce-looking men did was to pick up mail and some food supplies all of which was put into their bags. In the meantime the horses kept on running alongside the train. After these men had conducted their business they picked up the full bags swung them over their shoulders and walked by us on their way to the train exit door. I had another look at these beautiful daggers and would have gladly exchanged one of my "Schuco" toy cars for one of those daggers. They said good-bye with loud exuberance, opened the train door, and jumped back onto their horses! Then they all turned to their yurt village which by now had disappeared from view. I really would have liked to have ridden off with them.

That same day we were advised to get ourselves ready because we were approaching the Russian - Mongolian border. There we would have another inspection of our possessions and the would have to transfer onto a Mongolian train in the city of Manchouli. I said good-bye to my beautiful waitress, asked for her address and promised to write to her. I was rewarded with a hug and noticed to my disappointment, that her clothing smelled rather sweaty. I also said good-bye to the woman who played the records, and she played "Who is afraid of the big bad wolf" over and over again until we reached the border. I also said good-bye to the old man who made the four cups of tea for us.I felt really sad to leave all my friends who did not understand me and whom I did not understand either during the ten days of long conversations, which started when I boarded the Siberian Express in Moscow.

We were now in Manchouli, Mongolia. It was very cold and I was glad that my coat sleeves were still too long, for they protected my hands from the cold wind. There were only a few western travellers on this lonesome looking railroad station. Practically all the people looked like Mongolians with red faces,I guessed that their faces were red from the cold wind. Their language sounded very strange to me. There were a few open air kitchens with steaming kettles of food. The area around the station looked vacant. There were very few people, an old dilapidated bus, some horse-drawn carriages but not much activity. I guessed that everybody was waiting for this train to arrive. I was wondering what this train was going to look like. What a surprise it was when it finally pulled into the station! The first thing I saw were two large Japanese flags mounted on the front of a very modern diesel locomotive. It was a spotless locomotive and so were all the coaches which were coupled to it. The train looked a hundred times better than the Siberian Express. I told my brother that we would not be able to catch this train as we did in Russia. Besides there were no platforms between the coaches that my brother could have lifted me onto. My brother pointed to a brass plate which was attached to the coach. It said Westinghouse and listed various numbers. I did not know who or what Westinghouse was until my brother explained that these coaches were built in the United States by this Westinghouse Company. This was the first American product I saw and was duly impressed by it.

I was even more impressed when I got into our compartment. Everything was sparkling clean and highly polished. I said, "this is what I had expected the Siberian Express to look like" The dining car was modern with snow white tablecloths. I did not know, after my last train experience, that silverware and salt and pepper shakers could be so spotless without any traces of greasy fingerprints from previous users. The only objection I found were the strange odors of the oriental food. However, we were served western food on this train. Then I ran into a problem. I had to use the bathroom, my brother pointed to a door with a sign "lavatory" and an equivalent in Japanese. I went to this room which did not smell very good but I did not see

a toilet, there was a sort of of an oblong porcelain bowl built into the floor, I could not figure out its purpose. I ran back to my brother and told him that this could not be the bathroom because there was no toilet with a seat in that room. He took me back to the lavatory, what this room was called, and explained that this is a Japanese toilet. The oblong porcelain bowl had to be straddled. Then you let your pants down, sat on your haunches in a squatting position and did your business. But be sure he said. to hold on to the handles on the side of the wall, because when the train moves you could lose your balance and that could be very unpleasant. I thought to myself, this is such a wonderful train, why didn't they install real toilets?. My first experience in this Japanese bathroom was difficult, there were so many things you had to pay attention to, but I became quickly used to it. Actually, it was much more sanitary than to sit on a wooden seat that was used by all the travellers on this coach.

In our compartment we were provided with a yukata, a lightweight kimono, and getas, wooden slippers. After I learned to put on the yukata and learned to walk with the getas, which made a clopping sound every time you took a step, I felt quite comfortable. All I needed was a Japanese sword and I could pretend to be a Japanese warrior. I did not know then that these warriors were called samurai. There were quite a few Japanese on this train who had studied in Germany and spoke German fluently. But they spoke only to my father and brother. There were also a few Mongolians travellers, who also carried daggers in the back of their wide belts. This time I had a good look at the daggers, it seemed that the handles were inlaid with gold and silver, and I thought precious stones. Their Mongolian clothing was made from very colorful material. We spent two days on this train before we reached the city of Harbin in Manchuria. There we stayed overnight at a hotel. I don't remember much about Harbin except that many Russian Jews who had escaped from Russia before and after the revolution in 1917, lived here.

From Harbin we took a similar train which travelled through the city of Mudken to the port of Dairen on the southern tip of Manchuria. This train ride took two days from Harbin and it ended our long train trip from Europe into Asia. We had spent a total of 14 days on trains not counting the days we spent in hotels.

The weather in Dairen was quite warm and I did not need my overcoat any longer. We went on a sightseeing tour in Dairen but I don't recall any memorable sights. I saw many rickshaws pulled by Chinese coolies, and Chinese dock workers who were carrying tremendously heavy loads either on their backs or suspended from bamboo poles which they balanced on their shoulders. Their bodies were glistening with sweat that poured from their bodies. I did not know, but I suspected, that these hard working coolies received only a pittance for their backbreaking labor. I also saw many Japanese soldiers everywhere we went. We spent the night in a small hotel and the following day took our baggage by taxi to the dock. From there a Japanese ship would take us to our final destination Shanghai.

The agent at the dock told my father that our names did not appear on either the 1st class or 2nd class passenger lists. If we didn't want to wait for another ship he could accommodate us in steerage. It was of no use for my father to argue with this agent because first of all, we did not have enough money to allow us to spend a few more days in Dairen waiting for a ship that may or may not have 1st or 2nd class cabins available. Secondly, my my father realized that this was a racket for the local agent who pocketed the difference between the 1st class and steerage fares. My parents decided that we would be able to survive the three day voyage on the "Dairen Maru"

We were herded down below deck, on a narrow and steep companionway. The smell which met us was sickening, it smelled of sea sickness and other strange odors. I thought we were all going to be sick and add our share to the already existing sea sickness smell. My mother complained to a Japanese ship's officer, who bowed much and smiled

at my mother, but could not do anything to correct this miserable condition. the steerage deck was divided into large squares which in turn were divided with tatami mats. We were assigned to a square in the approximate center of the ship. Which apparently was a very desirable location, because in the center you don't feel the roll of the ship as much as the people did who had their areas on the sides of the ship. We shared our square with eight other passengers. Each passenger was assigned to one tatami mat and a smallarea for the baggage. A tatami mat is a thick covered straw mat whih is about six feet long and three feet wide. There was another German family in the next square who had also booked and paid for a 1st class cabin, but otherwise we were surrounded by Orientals. These passengers were eating strange- loking foods out of small bowls with chopsticks accompanied with loud sucking noises. Some ladies unashamedly nursed their babies. My mother told me not to look, but I had never seen this done before and I had never seen a naked bosom before either, so I sneaked a few looks once in a while.

People were smoking, drinking, playing cards and talking very loudly. Just like the soldiers on the German train. This went on day and night. The very firm tatami mats, the stifling hot and smoky air, the loud voices and the clicking of mah jong pieces made sleeping nearly impossible. While I was lying on my tatami mat, trying to go to sleep, I saw something moving in the beams above. I thought it may have been a cat. When I saw more rapid movements, Iasked my brother, "what kind of animals are those?" He said , "those are rats. Take your blanket and we will go on deck and sleep on a deckchair." I very quickly took his advice and followed him to the deck above. We were not able to sleep on the deck for very long. The deck crew came early to scrub down the deck, also it had become very cool. Reluctantly, we went back to our parents below deck. Breakfast, lunch and dinner were served very unceremoniously, we sat at long wooden tables on deck under an awning. For breakfast we received boiled eggs and rice, for lunch rice with meat and vegetables and for dinner the same. Coffee or tea was poured into our cups from aluminum water kettles.We were very glad that this trip was coming

to an end in two more days. One thing which amazed me was that my mother never once said that we should have stayed in Germany.

During the second day the "Dairen Maru" anchored in Tsingtao, this was a German colony before the first world war. There, my father bought a basket of nice-looking apples from a peddler who had come aboard. My father paid for the apples with German coins which the peddler accepted without hesitation.
A Japanese ship's officer told us that we must not eat the apples until they have been washed in a purple-colored water solution which contained potassium permanganate, and that the apples must be peeled before we ate them. He told us that when we got to Shanghai we had to do that with all the fresh fruit and vegetables we bought. The vegetables must then be cooked before we ate them. Also, he warned us that we could not drink water anywhere in China unless it had been boiled. If we didn't do that we would contractvery serious tropical stomach diseases."What kind of a country are we going to live in?" We asked ourselves.

The ocean around us had turned into a muddy light brown color. My brother told me that we were now in the Yellow Sea and this was the color we would see until we got to Shanghai. While we were anchored in Tsingtao, a German couple who were not Jewish, invited my brother and me to their 1st class cabin for tea and cookies. They had lived in Japan for many years and told us that they were very sorry about the many changes that have occurred in Germany during the past years. We admired their cabin and realized how comfortably we could have travelled on on this ship. But then I would not have seen the naked bosom and the rats! There was only one night left before we arrived in Shanghai. That night my parents joined us on deck and we all slept on deck chairs away from the odors of the steerage deck. At that time we had no idea that the miserable experience was only child's play compared to what was in store for us during the coming five years in Shanghai.

The following day the "Dairen Maru" entered the mouth of the Yangtze-Kiang river and then turned south into the Whangpoo river where the city of Shanghai is situated. As we approached Shanghai we could see from the distance many large buildings. The river was busy with much river traffic. There were tug boats, large and small junks, freighters from many different countries, small steamers, like our ship, American, British, and Japanese naval vessels and many sampans. As we came closer to the city we could see the very impressive large bank, hotel and office buildings, all built by British and other foreign interests. The streets were busy with trucks, buses, street-cars, automobiles, bicycles, rickshaws, crowded with people and noises that carried over to our ship. I nudged my brother and told him that I thought I would like living in this international city.

The "Dairen Maru" finally tied up at the wharf. I saw my sister Gerda right away. She and her husband and child were searching for us among the many passengers crowding the deck. The air was hot and humid and I felt very uncomfortable in my European winter clothin After clearing customs we were allowed to go ashore where we were re-united with my sister and her family. There was much crying again, but this time out of happiness.

So, after 14 long days on trains, 4 days in hotels and 3 days on the ship we had finally arrived on June 19, 1940 in Shanghai, our new home. We had no idea how long we would live there or what life had in store for us.

Bodo (Bud) Zimmermann
San Francisco, California
May 20, 1998